

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4933

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 3585

FOR AMBASSADOR VANCE FROM BYROADE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, PK

SUBJECT: UH750009 - MANSOOR AHMED

1. BHUTTO TELEPHONED ME LAST NIGHT FROM QUETTA, AND IN GUARDED LANGUAGE TOLD ME THAT HE HAD GIVEN THE ORDERS TO MOVE AGAINST THREE MORPHINE-HEROIN BASE LABS INSIDE THE TRIBAL AREA IN THE NORTHWEST FRONTIER PROVINCE. THIS WAS IN RESPONSE TO A LETTER TO HIM DATED APRIL 3 WHICH I HAD SENT TO HIM IN QUETTA. TEXT OF LETTER FOLLOWS:

QUOTE: DEAR MR. PRIME MINISTER;

I AM RELUCTANT TO APPROACH YOU EVEN BY LETTER DURING YOUR BUSY DAYS IN BALUCHISTAN, BUT I HAVE RECEIVED A REPORT ON WHAT APPEARS TO BE A SERIOUS DEVELOPMENT WITH RESPECT TO ILLEGAL NARCOTICS PRODUCTION IN PAKISTAN, AND ONE WHICH SEEMINGLY COULD HAVE SERIOUS DEMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUR GOVERNMENT.

YOU MAY BE AWARE THAT IN JULY 1975 A MORPHINE BASE LABORATORY WAS LOCATED AND RAIDED IN SWAT, RESULTING IN THE ARREST OF SEVERAL SIGNIFICANT TRAFFICKERS AND THE SEIZURE OF A SIZABLE AMOUNT OF MORPHINE BASE (MORPHINE BASE IS A POWDERY SUBSTANCE PRODUCED FROM RAW OPIUM AND CAN BE CONVERTED TO HEROIN ON A POUND FOR POUND BASIS). THE DISCOVERY WAS A JOINT ENDEAVOR BY THE PAKISTAN NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD AND THE UNITED STATES DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION BUT THE PNCB, OF
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COURSE, TOOK THE FINAL AND LAUDATORY ACTION ON ITS OWN.

THERE IS A DISTURBING REPORT THAT THE DOCTOR INVOLVED IN THAT CASE IS ALREADY RELEASED AND BACK IN THE BUSINESS, BUT I HASTEN TO SAY I HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING PERSONALLY WHETHER THIS IS TRUE OR NOT.

IN MARCH 1976 A MORPHINE SULPHATE LABORATORY WAS ALSO DETECTED AND SEIZED IN LYALLPUR. IT WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF MILLIONS OF MORPHINE SULPHATE TABLETS THROUGHOUT EUROPE (MORPHINE SULPHATE IS PRODUCED FROM RAW OPIUM AND IT IS MADE INTO TABLET FORM FOR ORAL CONSUMPTION - THEY SOLD FOR FROM \$4.00 TO \$8.00 PER TABLET).

THE LATEST DEVELOPMENT IS THAT ON MARCH 29, A PNCB/DEA OPERATIVE SUPPLIED THREE SAMPLES OF MORPHINE BASE/HEROIN BASE ALONG WITH INTELLIGENCE THAT THREE LABORATORIES ARE OPERATING FULL SCALE JUST INSIDE THE TRIBAL AREA IN THE NWFP CONVERTING RAW GUM OPIUM TO MORPHINE, MORPHINE SULPHATE, MORPHINE BASE AND HEROIN. THESE LABS ARE OPERATING WITH SEEMING IMMUNITY BECAUSE THE PNCB IS NOT EMPOWERED TO TAKE CORRECTIVE ACTION IN THE TRIBAL AREA. ON THIS SAME DATE THE PNCB/DEA OPERATIVE, A DEPENDABLE SOURCE, HAD OBSERVED THREE FINISHED KILOGRAMS OF HEROIN IN ONE OF THE LABORATORIES.

IT WOULD SEEM THAT THE PROLIFERATION OF HARD DRUGS PRODUCTION IN PAKISTAN, WHICH HAS LONG BEEN FEARED, IS FAST OCCURRING. THE THREE TRIBAL AREA LABS PRODUCING OPIATE DERIVATIVES ARE WITHIN A RADIUS OF 1/4 MILE OF EACH OTHER. THE DOCTOR INVOLVED HAS ALREADY TRAINED AT LEAST SIX CHEMISTS IN THE PROCESS. HE IS RECRUITING OTHER DOCTORS TO JOIN HIM IN THE EXTREMELY LARGE PROFITS INVOLVED. IT WOULD SEEM THAT THE TRIBAL AREA IS BEING LOOKED UPON AS A HAVEN FOR SUCH ILLEGAL OPERATIONS. WE HAD GREATLY FEARED THIS AS PRESSURES ARE PUT UPON THE BIG OPERATORS ELSEWHERE. HISTORICALLY TURKEY, FRANCE, AND THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE, CONSISTING OF BURMA, LAOS AND THAILAND, HAVE BEEN THE PRIMARY SOURCES OF MORPHINE BASE AND HEROIN. IT SEEMS TO OUR EXPERTS THAT PAKISTAN IS NOW ENTERING THIS LEAGUE. I KNOW YOU WILL OF COURSE RECOGNIZE THAT THIS PROBLEM CAN RAISE SEVERE PROBLEMS FOR PAKISTAN INTERNATIONALLY AS WELL AS DOMESTICALLY.

IN VIEW OF THE SERIOUSNESS AND IMMEDIACY OF THIS MATTER, AND TO AVOID ANYTHING IN WRITING FROM ME, I HAD CONFIDENTIAL

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HOPED TO BRIEF AZIZ AHMED FULLY ON ITS CURRENT STATUS, HOPING HE COULD GET IT TO YOU IN QUETTA. UNFORTUNATELY I AM INFORMED HE WILL BE OUT OF ISLAMABAD FOR ABOUT A WEEK. THE URGENCY OF THE MATTER IS THAT PNCB IS IN A POSITION NOW TO MOVE ON THE LABS AND CATCH THEM RED-HANDED. THE PNCB CHAIRMAN WOULD FAVOR THIS MOVE. WE ARE IN AGREEMENT THAT DELAY WILL COMPROMISE THE CASE. IF THE LABS ARE ALERTED THEY WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY MOVE AND IT WOULD

PROBABLY TAKE MONTHS TO LOCATE THEM AGAIN.

I CAN OF COURSE ONLY BE PARTIALLY AWARE AT BEST OF THE PROBLEMS YOU WOULD FORSEE IN THIS TYPE OF OPERATION INTO THE TRIBAL AREAS, WHICH I WOULD ASSUME MIGHT INVOLVE SOME POLICE OR FRONTIER FORCE SUPPORT. I THEREFORE AM UNABLE TO RECOMMEND ANY COURSE OF ACTION TO YOU EVEN IF IT WERE PROPER FOR ME TO DO SO. I HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE HOWEVER, THAT YOU MAY NOT BE APPRISED OF THIS CURRENT SITUATION UNLESS I TAKE THE INITIATIVE MYSELF TO INFORM YOU. I DO SO IN THE CONVICTION THAT YOU WOULD WANT TO KNOW, EVEN THOUGH I DEEPLY REGRET HAVING TO PASS INFORMATION TO YOU ON SUCH A DIFFICULT AND DELICATE PROBLEM. SINCERELY. HENRY A. BYROADE.

END QUOTE.

2. COMMENT: THIS IS A VERY DELICATE MATTER FOR BHUTTO, WHICH I TOOK INTO ACCOUNT IN THE CAREFULLY WORDED LAST PARAGRAPH OF MY LETTER. I AM NOT AWARE THAT POLICE ACTION OF THIS TYPE HAS EVER PREVIOUSLY BEEN ATTEMPTED INSIDE THE TRIBAL AREA. I WROTE THE LETTER TO BHUTTO WHEN IT BECAME APPARENT THAT THE PNCB WAS HESITANT TO APPROACH MINISTER OF INTERIOR, ABDUL QAYYUM KHAN, UNDER WHOM PNCB OPERATES, ON THIS CASE. QAYYUM IS A POWER TO BE RECKONED WITH, IN DOMESTIC POLITICS GENERALLY, AND AS REGARDS THE TRIBAL AREAS SPECIFICALLY. I CONGRATULATED BHUTTO ON THE BOLDNESS OF HIS DECISION, SAYING I FELT CERTAIN IN THE LONG RUN IT WOULD PROVE BENEFICIAL.

3. THERE IS CONSIDERABLE CHANCE THAT THIS OPERATION MAY BE COMPROMISED BEFORE BHUTTO'S PLANNED STRIKE AS THINGS HAD REACHED THE STAGE WHERE IT WAS HARD TO CONFIDENTIAL

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MAINTAIN THINGS IN SUSPENSE. THE MOVE INTO THE TRIBAL AREA ALSO WILL INVOLVE A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF OFFICERS AND MEN, WHO MUST BE BROUGHT INTO THE OPERATION TO ENSURE ITS SUCCESS. REGARDLESS OF THE OUTCOME, HOWEVER, WE HOPE THAT SUCH A STRIKE WILL BE A WARNING THAT THE TRIBAL AREAS ARE NO LONGER A COMPLETE SAFE-HAVEN AS REGARDS NARCOTICS. MOREOVER, IT SHOULD SERVE NOTICE TO ONE AND ALL THAT BHUTTO MEANS BUSINESS IN THE MATTER OF THE ILLEGAL PRODUCTION OF HARD DRUGS EVEN THOUGH HE HAS HAD OF POLITICAL NECESSITY TO MOVE CAUTIOUSLY. BYROADE

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